



THE SOUTH TEXAS REGIONAL COCORAHS NEWSLETTER

NWS
Corpus
Christi



Spring 2010 Edition

Welcome to the spring edition of the CoCoRaHS newsletter!

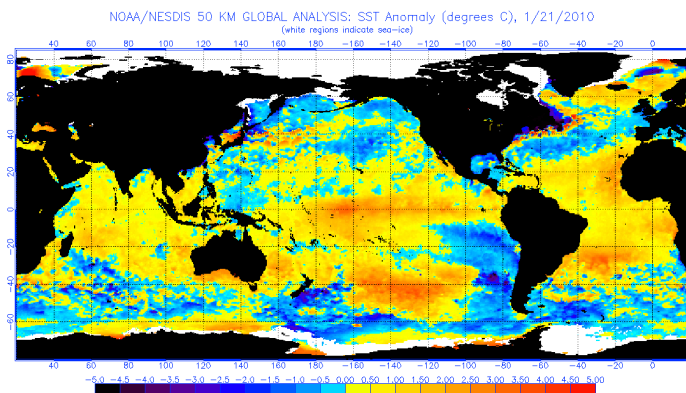
by Tony Merriman

What a difference a season makes! It was just last fall that we were talking about one of the most severe droughts in South Texas history. Recently we have been enjoying above normal rainfall, thanks in large part to the effects of strengthening El Niño conditions in the equatorial Pacific. With the winter season wrapping up, spring is just around the corner. El Niño springs typically generate more frequent severe weather events across South Texas.

This edition of the CoCoRaHS newsletter will define what exactly makes a thunderstorm severe. It will also ex-

plain the importance of reporting severe weather to the National Weather Service (NWS). Your reports of severe weather greatly assist us at the NWS with issuing timely and accurate warnings. Your diligent rainfall re-

ports also assists us with adjusting the radar algorithms for more accurate storm total estimates. We really appreciate everything you do to help us create better forecasts and services!



El Niño conditions in the equatorial Pacific typically generates an above normal springtime severe weather activity over South Texas.



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What exactly is a severe thunderstorm?

by Tony Merriman

"What's the difference between a severe thunderstorm and a regular thunderstorm?" That is a great question that I have received from quite a few CoCoRaHS observers. Only one of the two following characteristics is required for a thunderstorm to be considered

severe. The storm must either generate hail 1" or larger in diameter OR produce damaging winds (winds 58 mph or greater). Severe thunderstorms can also spawn tornadoes. A tornado is defined as a violently rotating column of air touching the ground. A

funnel cloud is a violently rotating column of air that does not reach the ground.

In addition to the CoCoRaHS rainfall observer network, the National Weather Service in Corpus Christi also relies on
(continued on page 2)



What exactly is a severe thunderstorm? (Continued)

"(Severe thunderstorms) generate hail 1" or larger in diameter OR produce damaging winds (winds 58 mph or greater)"



a SkyWarn storm spotter network for reports of both severe and non-severe weather. SkyWarn training courses are held during the late winter/early spring months before the peak of severe weather season. Training sessions will be held this spring at various locations across South Texas. Anyone who is interested in becoming a SkyWarn spotter can attend any of the FREE training sessions. Please check

out the following link for upcoming courses in your area: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/crp/?n=skywarn>

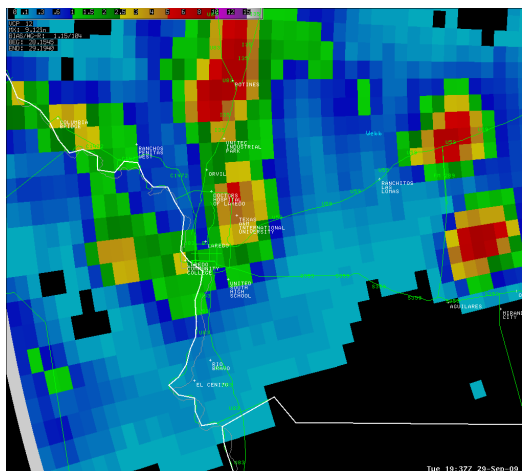
If there are currently no classes being offered in your area and you would like for one to be, please email Tony Merriman (Tony.Merriman@noaa.gov) or John Metz (John.Metz@noaa.gov) and we can try to organize a course for your community.



The importance of severe weather and localized flood reports

by Juan Alanis, Jr.

Storm Total Precipitation Radar Estimate



An example of a very localized storm occurred back on September 30th, 2009. A strong, very slow moving thunderstorm dumped between 4 to 6 inches in about two hours over northeast Laredo, causing significant flooding. Numerous high water rescues and road closures were reported. Yet, south Laredo reported little to no rain.

Thunderstorms can sometimes be very strong and slow moving, dumping heavy amounts of rain and or hail to isolated areas, resulting in significant flooding and property damage.

CoCoRaHS encourages you to send your heavy rain, hail and flooding reports directly into your local National Weather Service (NWS) office. To do this, simply click on the "significant weather" icon under the "enter new my reports" column after you sign in to CoCoRaHS. This selection will allow you to enter how much rain you have received in a given time span (example: one inch in a half hour period) and you can enter whether you have seen floods occurring, how much flooding as well as

any hail you have seen. You can also enter any other observations you have seen, such as high winds and damage. All reports will go immediately to the NWS. If you do not have easy access to the internet during a severe weather event, you can also report directly to the NWS by calling **1-888-579-9731**.

Your reports help verify what radar sees and can be critical in helping forecasters issue timely weather warnings for specific areas in cities and counties to help protect lives and property.





More South Texas CoCoRaHS observers needed

by Juan Alanis, Jr.

The CoCoRaHS observer network is now up and running in all 50 states, with nearly 2,000 observers here in Texas alone. This may sound like too many observers, yet the opposite is true. Rainfall amounts can vary greatly within a very short distance. One part of a city may receive an inch of rain while another part of the same city receives nothing. Therefore additional observers are needed to fill the gaps in areas where there are no observers.

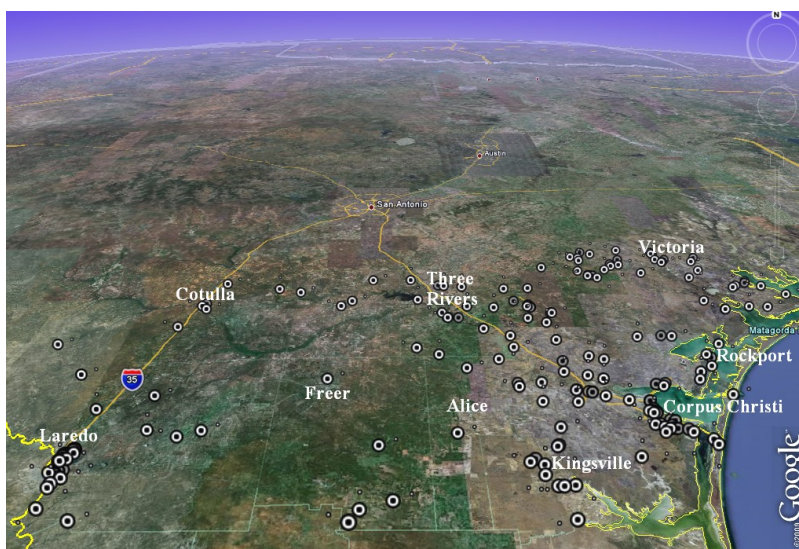
Here in South Texas, observers are needed in the following areas: northwestern and eastern sections of Webb County (including Oilton, Mirando City, Bruni and areas of Laredo west of interstate 35); much of Duval County, the southern half of

McMullen County and parts of the coastal bend between Victoria and Rockport. Please spread the word about CoCoRaHS. It costs nothing to join. All you need is enthusiasm for the weather, internet access and be willing to submit rainfall

readings (including reports of 0.00) every morning. A rain gauge will be sent to you after you register. For more information or to sign up to be an observer, please email Tony Merriman at

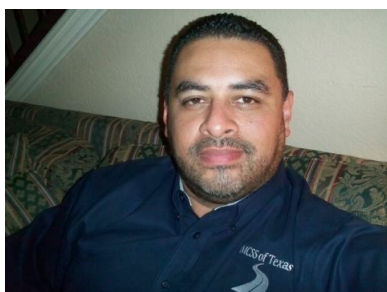
Tony.Merriman@noaa.gov

Map of Current South Texas CoCoRaHS observers



Meet a Webb County CoCoRaHS observer

by Juan Alanis, Jr.



Mr. Jerry Lopez, CoCoRaHS observer for stations TX-WB-18 and TX-WB-27, has had a passion for weather since age 13. He was the first CoCoRaHS observer in Webb County and was one of

the first rainfall observers in Webb County for the National Weather Service Corpus Christi office prior to the establishment of CoCoRaHS in Texas. Jerry has been instrumental in expanding CoCoRaHS in Laredo by establishing CoCoRaHS stations at the homes of family members and coworkers.

Jerry has been a lifelong Laredo resident and an accountant of 23 years. He has spent many years working with food establishments before starting at his current job

with Motor Carrier Safety Solutions. Jerry states that he enjoys his current job because it allows him to travel very frequently.

He has followed the weather closely since his days in high school and has carried a NOAA weather radio in his car for many years. Mr. Lopez has even installed a "Weather Bug" system at his workplace to monitor the latest local weather conditions.

In his spare time, Jerry does freelance photography and enjoys physical fitness.



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Recorded Forecasts: (361) 289-1861
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National Weather Service Mission Statement:

The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.

Brief National Weather Service History:

The National Weather Service has its beginnings in the early history of the United States. Weather has always been important to the citizenry of this country, and this was especially true during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The beginning of the National Weather Service we know today started on February 9th, 1870, when President Ulysses S. Grant signed a joint resolution of Congress authorizing the Secretary of War to establish a national weather service.

ON THE WEB!

<http://www.weather.gov/corpuschristi>

Meet a Nueces County CoCoRaHS observer

by Roger Gass



Roger Gass is originally from the "Heart of Texas" where he became interested in weather at a young age. He recalls watching thunderstorms, out hundreds of miles, roll across west Texas during springtime. His acquired passion for weather led him to Texas A&M University where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Meteorology in 2006.

After a short stint as a Broadcast Meteorologist in San Angelo, Texas, Roger moved to Corpus Christi in September of 2007 to join the National Weather Service Forecast Office as a Meteorologist Intern. During his time at the Corpus Christi Weather Forecast Office, Roger has worked many

events that have affected South Texas including Hurricane Dolly and the 2008-2009 South Texas Drought. Roger has also been a member of the Educational Outreach Team and has spoken weather safety to children all across the region from Victoria to Corpus Christi to Laredo.



If you would like to be featured in the Fall 2010 edition of the South Texas CoCoRaHS newsletter, please email Tony.Merriman@noaa.gov. We would love to hear from observers in other parts of South Texas!